

The next generation

The Mkomazi Project, run by the George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust (GAWPT), is a multi-disciplinary programme concentrating on endangered species programmes.

Lucy Fitzjohn

George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust

These species include the black rhino and wild dog, the rehabilitation of the game reserve to recently awarded

National Park status, and community outreach programmes in the villages surrounding the reserve.

Elisaria (Saria) is the Operations Manager at Mkomazi. He started at GAWPT in 1989 as a casual labourer, and now oversees the whole project, the operations, the systems and all the Tanzanian personnel. His natural authority and presence make him a key player in the sensitive politics of the project. He has recently taken over the duty of becoming the first Environmental Education (EE) Officer in the new EE programme, "Rafiki wa faru", being carried out by GAWPT with support from Save the Rhino, Tusk Trust and Chester Zoo.

Saria, how do you see your job? What enthuses you?

I think this work is very important for the nation as well as for the environment. Tanzania is one of the few countries left in the world where there are wild animals and a natural environment and for this

reason many people travel to Tanzania to see these things. I hope I can pass this natural inheritance down to the next generations.

To look after animals such as rhino takes quite a lot of determination and strength because a lot of people don't care about wild animals. You cannot be casual about this work, or lazy, and you should not really be ambitious for money or personal gain because this type of work has to be looked at with a different perspective - one of helping rebuild the natural resources of our country. Thirty years ago there were thousands of rhino and elephant in Tanzania and these were all killed in a matter of a few years. It takes such a little amount of time to destroy everything and so many years to rebuild it. There are many educated people who also are involved in the protection of wildlife but only for personal gain, and this is also destructive.

I know when I am an old man I will be able to say that I tried. I am pleased because we have now reached a sustainable level with Mkomazi. When I started working



GAWPT

The painted bus

here in 1989, there was almost nothing here. It is now a National Park, protected forever for the nation. I think all of us can only try and do what we can with what we have been given.

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Below:
Mkomazi rhinos take an interest in a Suzuki pick-up



What is your perspective on the new Environmental Education programme?

I think that talking to villagers who live in the surrounding areas is important. We have done a lot of work in the past helping these villages get basic classrooms for schools and now we are trying to help on the education side. When children have an education and when they understand the

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balance of the environment, this might help them respect it and protect it. Without this education, wild animals are only meat.

I think that the EE bus will have a big impact on the pupils. It will be a big day for the schools when the bus travels there and we give a lesson to the pupils. Also when the bus brings children into the reserve and into the rhino sanctuary, this will be an exciting day out for them. They will see the reserve, wild animals, maybe a rhino and then they will walk up to the EE classroom at the top of a hill in the rhino sanctuary, watch a DVD, have a lesson, have lunch, talk to the rhino rangers on duty, look around and then get taken home again. This will be a memorable day.

Thanks

Our heartfelt thanks to Chester Zoo, Capital International, the Rothschild Foundation and Ravensden, and to Tusk Trust and its supporters, for this wonderfully cooperative effort to create a really exciting new education programme. We look forward to reporting on the launch of Rafiki wa Faru in the next issue!

Tractors are a rhino's best friend

Lucy Fitzjohn
George Adamson Wildlife Preservation Trust

Equipment is desperately needed to maintain the high standard of the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary. This includes machinery, and specifically a dedicated sanctuary tractor.

Tractors start needing serious attention after about 13 years of use here, and although we can keep them going, after 17 years even we have to admit defeat to the stresses of workload and the condition of roads and the bush. So having flogged our previous tractor for 18 years, we were delighted to buy a new MF 5635 model with a €25,000 grant from the EAZA Rhino Campaign, and a hefty discount of €7,000 from Massey Ferguson, the makers of our great new machine.

Having selected and purchased the MF 5635, it had an interesting journey to Mkomazi. It arrived from Brazil into the port of Dar es Salaam, but the transport lorry broke down twice on the 600km last leg to Mkomazi. After each breakdown, the lorry needed a two-day roadside repair, and the rains had set in by this time - causing another day's delay on the sticky road into Mkomazi.

But our tractor arrived, and has already undertaken 50 hours of grass slashing, worked over the airstrip and cut firebreaks. It will also be used to maintain access and tracking roads and external security outpost areas, as well as being fitted with a trailer to move people, sand, cement, fence poles, and more. It's a vital piece of machinery, and we're glad to be putting it to immediate use. Brian Luckhurst, the local AGCO / MF agent has been to give our workshop team operational and safety training, and returned for a follow up visit with one of the managers of AGCO UK, who kindly agreed to replace the front tyres and tank cover with harder wearing models. Less agreeable was the green mamba resting on the back of the tractor that surprised him during his inspection of the tank.



The tractor in action

We hope that the rhino population of the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary will increase over the next few years through reproduction or translocations. With our ten-ton tipping trailer, dam scoop, palette for moving a sedated rhino, glass slashers and trailer, there will be plenty for our great new MF 5635 to do for a long time.

Thanks

We are extremely grateful to the EAZA Rhino Campaign for its grant of 25,000 euros, and to Massey Ferguson / AGCO UK and Tanzania for their generous discount and on-the-ground support.